

Report: Zuckerberg reads Chinese president's book

December 8 2014, by Didi Tang



In this Feb. 24, 2014 file photo, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks during a conference at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain. A Chinese government news portal on Monday, Dec. 8, 2014 released a photo of Zuckerberg with a copy of Chinese President Xi Jinping's book on governance at his desk while hosting a top Internet regulator from China, known for tight censorship. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez, File)

A Chinese government news portal released a photo Monday of

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg with a copy of Chinese President Xi Jinping's book on governance at his desk while hosting the country's top Internet regulator.

Zuckerberg, who has long sought market access to China, where Facebook is blocked, was quoted by China.com.cn as saying he purchased several copies of Xi's book so he and colleagues could learn about "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The California-based company did not immediately respond to inquiries regarding the visit to Facebook's offices by Internet regulator Lu Wei.

The gesture, interpreted as an effort by Zuckerberg to court the government, disappointed and angered activists in China, who have long held the social networking company in high regard for its ability to share information beyond the tight controls of the ruling Communist Party.

"Mr. Zuckerberg is either ignorant of China's politics or shameless," said prominent dissident Hu Jia, who called Lu a top enemy of Internet freedom and expressed worry that technology giants such as Facebook were kowtowing to Beijing for their own business interests. "He is an Internet genius who should understand the power of technology for social change."



This combination made from file photos shows Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, left, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. A Chinese government news portal on Monday, Dec. 8, 2014 released a photo of Zuckerberg with a copy of Xi's book on governance at his desk while hosting a top Internet regulator from China, known for tight censorship. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez, Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

China.com.cn, controlled by China's Internet Information Office and another government agency, said the photo was taken at Facebook's Menlo Park office and that Xi's book "The Governance of China" was at Zuckerberg's workstation when he hosted Lu.

"I bought this book for my colleagues as well," Zuckerberg was quoted as telling Lu. "I want them to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The photo shows a beaming Lu sitting in Zuckerberg's work chair, with the Facebook founder smiling and standing next to him.

"In that photo, Lu Wei looks the part of a boss," Hu said in a phone interview. "I feel ashamed for Facebook and sorry for Mr. Zuckerberg. When you yield to the executioners of the Internet, they will only become more arrogant."

A cartoon posted online showed Zuckerberg in a Chinese military outfit holding a bayonet and clutching Xi's book to his chest. Some commenters joked that he was close to joining the Communist Party of China, although others suggested that Zuckerberg might have placed Xi's book on his desk merely for show.

It was not clear when the visit took place, but Lu was in the United States last week to attend a Chinese-American Internet conference at which Beijing pushed for a louder voice in the management of the Internet. China also argued in favor of the concept of "information sovereignty," which could help justify its tight controls over Internet information.

Zuckerberg surprised Chinese college students in Beijing in October when he chatted with them for 30 minutes in Mandarin, in a move widely seen as an attempt to court Chinese good will.

China.com.cn said Zuckerberg gave Lu a tour of Facebook's office in Mandarin.

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